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SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL CONTACT GROUP MEETING ON GUINEA

REF: A. CONAKRY 96
[1](#)B. CONAKRY 97

Classified By: CHARGE ELIZABETH RASPOLIC FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. The February 16-17 inaugural meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea (ICG-G) met with coup leader Moussa Dadis Camara and a broad spectrum of civil society. Dadis defended his actions to date, said he was not interested in remaining in power, and laid out a vague roadmap to set Guinea back on the road to democracy. He expressed reluctance to lift the ban on political party and union activity and defended his blanket order to shoot criminals. Dadis's behavior was dramatic and confrontational in the extreme. The ICG-G agreed to set up a local contact group to closely follow the situation, but many are skeptical of the coup leader's intentions. END SUMMARY.

INTERNATIONAL CONTACT GROUP MEETING

[1](#)2. (C) On February 16 and 17, the inaugural meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea took place in Conakry. The meeting was hosted jointly by the President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and the Minister and Special Envoy of the African Union, Ibrahima Fall. The European Union, the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Organization of Francophone States, the United Nations, the Mano River Union, and France and Burkina Faso, in their capacities as UN Security Council members, sent delegations from their respective capitals or headquarters. AF/RSA Deputy Director Peter Henry Barlerin and Charge d'Affaires Elizabeth Raspolic represented the United States.

DADIS MEETS CIVIL SOCIETY AND ICG

[1](#)3. (C) In the afternoon of the 16th, the ICG-G was summoned to attend a meeting between coup leader and President of the National Council for Democracy and Development, Army Captain Moussa Dadis Camara (Dadis), and a fairly broad representation of civil society, unions, and political parties at the parliament building. Dadis appeared on the raised platform approximately 75 minutes late, wearing wrap-around sunglasses and his army fatigues. He opened the meeting by dramatically removing his glasses, jumping down off the platform, and proceeding to shake hands with a number of people. The applause was notably sparse.

[1](#)4. (C) He then replaced his sunglasses, spoke for about 15 minutes from a prepared text and sat down behind a large table on the dais with approximately 100 people, mostly military in uniform and many armed. Then, as the moderator

was about to introduce the first representative speaker, he jumped up and went back to the microphone, this time speaking with no script for approximately 30 minutes, in a much more animated tone and volume, gesticulating wildly and providing what amounted to a rambling, barely coherent, defense of the coup.

15. (C) Similar to what was reported ref A, Dadis said he did not intend to remain in power; his motive was to fight corruption and clean up the nation's finances. He laid out a very general plan to introduce a roadmap to put Guinea on a path to democracy with a "chronograph" of deadlines. At the same time, he made it clear that it was civil society's responsibility to come up with realistic proposals. If civil society decides it wants to hold legislative elections in "two months, three months, six months, in eight months" from now, he said, elections would be held.

16. (C) He announced that neither he nor any member of the CNDD or Prime Minister Kabine Kamara would stand for election, but hinted that, if other members of the government wanted to run for office, they would be permitted to do so. He was vague on the subject of lifting the ban on political party and union activity, hinting that if he did so and there was violence, he would be the first to be blamed. On the subject of military roadblocks and blanket orders to shoot criminals, Dadis said these could be changed soon, but warned that the international community would be the first to criticize him if "one of you Ambassadors" are injured or killed by bandits. Rather, he said, "it would be better to let us do the work we need to do to clean up this country."

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CIVIL SOCIETY DEFERENTIAL

17. (C) Leaders of most of the major political parties, a representative each of the unions, employers, religious leaders, women's groups, and civic groups, as well as the AU's Fall, ECOWAS's Chambas, UN Special Representative for West Africa Said Djinnit, and others spoke for a restricted maximum of five minutes each. The remarks were noted for their deference to Dadis. Any criticism was cautious and crafted in such as way as not to offend the CNDD or its leader. Liberian Foreign Minister and Mano River Union head of delegation Olu-Bankie King-Akerle went so far as to address Dadis by his preferred title, "President of the Republic", and offered greetings from his "sister in Liberia, President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson."

18. (C) The most skeptical intervention) and skeptical is used in the relative sense -- was the head of the EU delegation, retired German Ambassador and Special Representative of the EU Presidency, Harro Adt. Adt listed a number of things Dadis had promised to do "soon", noting the absence of specificity in the roadmap or the chronograph. After the meeting, Chambas said he happened to be standing next to a person in civilian clothes who bore a CNDD name plate. Chambas said that when he asked the CNDD member if he thought the chronograph would be a successful tool to bring democracy back to Guinea, the man had replied that the CNDD's strategy was for civil society to come to the conclusion that it was unrealistic to move too quickly towards democracy. Chambas commented that he did not think this was part of the CNDD's talking points, but was probably an acute observation.

19. (C) On the morning of the 17th, the ICG met separately at the hotel where the conference was held, first with the Minister for Territorial Administration (MATAP) and the President of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), then with civil society. MATAP and CENI both asked for significant sums of additional monies to be able to carry off re-doing the electoral list as well as preparing for, and conducting, elections. Many, including France and the OIC, stressed the need for CENI and MATAP to work together, but also made the critical point that CENI's independence needs

to be protected. The resident UK Ambassador called for more evidence-based specifics on the budget requirements of the two organizations. In the separate meeting with civil society, political parties noted they had signed a pact specifying that they would refrain from violence should the CNDD lift the ban on their activities, and expressed optimism that elections could be held by the last quarter of 2009.

DADIS MEETING WITH ICG

¶10. (C) Dadis agreed to meet one representative each of the ICG again on the afternoon of the 18th, this time at the sprawling Alpha Yaya military camp. Although the group was led to believe this would be a private audience with Dadis, there was a television crew with microphones present. Chambas was placed on a couch with Dadis, who sat in a slouched position and with a sullen expression, staring at the carpet. Chambas spoke in English, pausing while Dadis's interpreter relayed each bit of the message in French.

¶11. (C) Chambas was extraordinarily deferential, praising Dadis at length on the efforts he had taken to restore security and on the evident restraint he had shown in implementing the bloodless coup before very gently reminding him of the need to lift the ban on political party and union activities, to set a timetable for the elections, and to ensure inclusivity in the political process. He then mentioned a concern which the World Bank resident representative had raised earlier within the group, that the government was in arrears with its World Bank payments and was only days away from the suspension of new financial flows. He cautiously suggested that Dadis appoint a new finance minister to take charge of the situation.

¶12. (C) At this, Dadis suddenly flew into a rage, launching on a 15 minute tirade. He said Chambas had no right to speak to him in that tone. He was the head of state, he was the President of the Republic, he was the commander in chief of the armed forces. Chambas, he shouted, "could not order him to re-instate the finance minister (sic) he had fired".

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It was his decision to keep him or get rid of him. He had been fired because he was not taking his job seriously and Dadis wanted to make an example of him to the rest of the government. He referred again and again to his training and education in Germany and France, saying that this was a source of his moral courage and insistence on things being done correctly. Dadis bade the previously suspended Finance Minister, Army Captain Mamadou Sande, whose status was at the time unclear, stand up, citing again that disciplinary action would be an example to other ministers that Dadis was serious about cleaning up government.

¶13. (C) Dadis then lashed out at the front row of people sitting in a half circle, sneering at them that "This isn't Europe or the United States: each and every one of your governments came about as the result of a coup) ATT (Mali's Amadou Toumani Toure), (Burkina Faso President Blaise) Compaore, all of them!" He whirled back on Chambas, saying again that this was no way to talk to a head of state. He said that when Senegalese President Wade had come to see him or Libyan leader Qadhafi had called him, their conversations had remained private. "You don't treat Yar'Adua this way," he repeated again and again.

¶14. (C) Finally, after several failed attempts, the AU's Ibrahima Fall was able to interject himself, apologizing for the group's having criticized Dadis on television and repeating three times in succession: "You are the President of the Republic." He attempted to make the point that Chambas had been misunderstood, that the group was there to help, and that it was in Dadis's interest to have a functioning finance ministry, but Dadis seemed either unwilling or unable to hear him. Prime Minister Kamara, who had been sitting silent, then unexpectedly took the floor,

proposing that Chambas's comment had been mistranslated by "my sister", the interpreter, and correcting the record. The Prime Minister suggested Chambas "had very politely and very respectfully asked the President to appoint a Finance Minister, not reinstate the Finance Minister." Dadis, calm by now, gamely accepted the explanation, waving away his own behavior as "the excitability and energy of youth."

¶15. (C) After the meeting, while Chambas and Fall were whisked into another room for a private meeting with Dadis, Captain Sande sheepishly introduced himself, handing out his card and noting that he had in fact only that day been re-instated as Minister of Finance. When Chambas and Fall emerged, after another ten minutes with Dadis, the entire group was made to pose for group photographs on the steps of the headquarters.

¶16. (C) The group re-assembled at the hotel to review the draft communique. All were startled and put off by Dadis's behavior, which most took as a ruse to assert his power without confronting the essential points Chambas had by agreement attempted to make.

ICG STRATEGY MOVING FORWARD

¶17. (C) The head of the French delegation, MFA Director for Africa Stephan Gompertz, said the strategy should be to ignore Dadis's outbursts but keep the pressure on him to deliver. The EU's Adt espoused a similar view, noting privately that we did not want to end up with an Idi Amin in West Africa. USDEL noted that if Dadis behaved this way towards a visiting international delegation, he could not be expected to be more accommodating towards Guinean civil society. He reiterated the USG's support for the AU and ECOWAS, for elections as soon as possible in 2009, as well as noting that preparations were already quite far along at the time of coup. He also repeatedly advanced the position that the junta cede power to a transition civilian government and return to their barracks, and noted that the United States had suspended all but humanitarian aid and elections assistance.

¶18. (C) Gompertz and Adt said independently that they do not believe it realistic to push for the CNDD to cede power before elections, though they recognize that Dadis will weigh heavily on any outcome, regardless of whether he runs himself. Chambas and Fall, though they did not say so explicitly, appear to believe the same thing. Although the United States succeeded in expunging from the communique

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paragraphs calling for new and additional foreign assistance, the resident UN Development Programme representative and the Burkinabe and Liberian Foreign Ministers argued against, and there appeared to be little support for, the U.S. position. The strategy behind the communique, therefore, was to record what Dadis had said, bank them as commitments, then agree to meet again in March to assess progress.

COMMENT

¶19. (C) Comment: Although the USG may want to wait to see what transpires over the next month, it will likely be necessary to take further steps. In spite of what Dadis says about not wanting to remain in power and the fact that he is clearly concerned about the way people see him, he also appears very much taken with the trappings of power. End Comment.
RASPOLIC